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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SP](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH FM MORATINOS ON
BILATERAL RELATIONS

REF: A. MADRID 3974
[1](#)B. MADRID 3929

Classified By: DCM Bob Manzanares; reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The Ambassador called on FM Miguel Angel Moratinos on December 22 to review the progress made in U.S.-Spain relations over the last six months and to identify areas that remained problematic. He said the Spanish ship/plane sale to Venezuela had undermined progress in other areas, particularly given the mixed messages we received from the Spanish government in the runup to the conclusion of the deal. Moratinos acknowledged the damage inflicted by the episode, but insisted that he remained in charge of Spain's foreign relations and wanted to find areas to work more closely with the USG, particularly in Latin America. He complained that the USG seemed to hold Spain to a different standard than other EU countries and allowed disagreements on some issues to overshadow Spanish contributions on others, such as Afghanistan and BMENA. He expressed disappointment that Secretary Rice had been unable to attend the Euro Mediterranean Summit in November and noted the strong interest of Vice President Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega in visiting the U.S. in the near future. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador noted that bilateral relations had improved substantially over the last six months, and there would have been even more progress had it not been for Spain's sale of ships and planes to Venezuela. He assured Moratinos that the USG knew that the Spanish MFA had made a good faith effort to derail the weapons deal, but had been outflanked by MOD Jose Bono. Moratinos acknowledged the basic facts of the issue and said that both he and Deputy FM Bernardino Leon had believed they had successfully turned off the aircraft component of the sale at the time they approached the Ambassador. However, MOD Bono did eventually win the internal debate and proceed with the sale.

[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador said it had been disconcerting for the USG to have such differing messages from the Spanish government regarding Venezuela (REF A). The Ambassador underscored his need to be certain that his primarily Spanish interlocutor (whom he understood to be Moratinos) could speak for the government on the most critical and sensitive issues. Otherwise, the Embassy's credibility in Washington would be eroded, to the detriment of all. Moratinos insisted that he spoke for the government on foreign affairs and, press reports to the contrary, had the full confidence of President Zapatero (COMMENT: Spanish media reported rumors that Zapatero had been displeased with the limited attendance and impact of the Euro Mediterranean Summit in Barcelona in November and was considering replacing Moratinos. Some in the diplomatic corps have also speculated on no Moratinos' eventual replacement, but we have reason to place much stock

in this latest version. END COMMENT).

14. (C) Continuing on Venezuela, Moratinos said that there was much the USG and Spain could still do together despite friction over the sales, and that such cooperation fell squarely within the purview of the MFA. He said the Spanish government was concerned about the continuing anti-democratic drift of the Chavez government and understands that organizations such as the NGO "Sumate" need outside support. Moratinos said Spain would continue to monitor democratic conditions in Venezuela and lend its support whenever possible to steer events in a positive direction.

//SPANISH ANGST OVER BILATERAL "VISUALS"//

15. (C) Adopting a more severe tone and saying he was delivering a message as Foreign Minister, Moratinos complained that the USG treated Spain differently than other EU countries, for example "singling out" Spain on weapons sales to Venezuela when other European countries were undertaking similar sales with no impact on their bilateral relations with the U.S. He wondered when the USG's goalposts for improved relations with Spain would remain constant. "We do so much with you on Afghanistan, Pakistan, and BMENA, yet one misstep and we're back starting over," he lamented.

16. (C) Moratinos asked whether it would be reasonable to expect improved visuals in the bilateral relationship. The Ambassador noted that Secretary Rice did not have a visit to Madrid on her agenda and would probably not visit in the first part of 2006. The Ambassador said that if we had seen greater progress on issues such as Venezuela, we may have been able to envision higher-level contacts, but at this point such meetings seem doubtful. He noted that comments such as those made December 18 by President Zapatero taunting

the Popular Party for its close relations with the U.S. were not helpful and undermined those who said that the Spanish government had moved away from using anti-Americanism for domestic political gain.

17. (C) Returning to Latin America, Moratinos reiterated Spain's readiness to work with the USG on issues of mutual concern. He said democracy promotion and dealing with populist leaders such as Evo Morales posed a serious challenge to all of us. The Ambassador agreed, noting that we had congratulated Morales on his victory and hoped that he would govern democratically. Moratinos said Spain could work with the USG on Cuba (he did not elaborate). He noted Deputy FM Leon's good meetings with USG counterparts during his recent visit to Washington and said he looked forward to furthering our joint agenda during the upcoming visit of WHA A/S Tom Shannon.

//SPANISH VP WANTS TO VISIT U.S.//

18. (C) Moratinos resurfaced the idea of having Vice President Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega visit the U.S. soon (REF B), saying he believed it was important for both our leaderships to understand where our common interests lie. He said the Vice President is very interested in making this visit and hoped the Embassy could work with the Spanish government to support the visit and arrange a strong agenda. Moratinos reiterated his disappointment that Secretary Rice had been unable to attend the Euro Mediterranean Summit, noting that he had worked hard to get the invitation for her despite UK resistance to the idea.

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